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NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 18, 2011

NEWS RELEASE
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OHS Launches 13th Annual Safe Family Holiday Campaign **Thanksgiving Week**

Enforcement focus is on DUI, Aggressive Driving, and Seat Belts.

Dover – Soon thousands of Delawareans will be hitting the road to visit family and friends and even do some after Thanksgiving shopping. The Office of Highway Safety wants to remind motorists as they travel this holiday season to buckle up, have patience on the roadway with other drivers, and if partaking in some holiday ‘spirits’ use a designated driver because Delaware law enforcement will be on high alert to make sure you arrive safely to your destination.

“I’m thankful that efforts like this are underway to help keep families more safe this holiday season,” Governor Jack Markell said. “The message is clear – celebrate, but celebrate safely.”

Sunday November 20th will begin the Delaware Office of Highway Safety’s 13th annual Safe Family Holiday Campaign. Safe Family Holiday enforcement activities over the next six weeks will include 29 law enforcement agencies statewide conducting a total of 1,009 DUI saturation patrols, 133 Aggressive Driving patrols, 114 Seat Belt patrols, & 2 Seat Belt checkpoints.

Overtime seat belt enforcement begins November 20th and runs through December 3rd and aggressive driving enforcement will run November 21st through December 31st. The DUI saturation patrols will begin November 23rd and will run through the entire holiday season and will supplement already scheduled *Checkpoint Strikeforce* DUI checkpoints.

“Thanksgiving is the beginning of the holiday party season with family get-togethers and holiday work parties and as a result we tend to see an increase in crashes and injuries on our roadways,” said Jana Simpler, Director of the Office of Highway Safety. “Think twice about

hitting Delaware roadways this holiday season unbelted, impaired, or driving aggressively. Our law enforcement partners will be patrolling and you will be stopped for failing to obey Delaware's traffic laws."

Since January 1st of this year, 92 people have lost their lives on Delaware roadways in 87 fatal traffic crashes, compared to 88 people killed in 80 fatal traffic crashes this time last year. Aggressive driving behaviors, including speeding, running stop signs, and not granting right of way, have contributed to 36% of the fatal traffic crashes so far this year. To date alcohol consumption has been involved in 27% of the traffic deaths, and 58% of vehicle occupant fatalities were individuals not wearing their seat belts.

Seat belt enforcement was added to the focus of Safe Family Holiday because of the rise in unbelted traffic deaths this year coupled with the slight decrease in the statewide seat belt use rate. Safety officials are hoping that with the additional focus on seat belts this holiday season, more people will buckle up.

"Properly wearing your seat belt can mean the difference between surviving a crash and becoming a statistic. This holiday season we're asking everyone to be more conscientious and buckle up every trip, every time," said Lewis Schiliro, Secretary for Delaware Safety and Homeland Security.

Over the last decade, several public awareness activities have become Safe Family Holiday traditions including the OHS "Mocktail" party and the DUI Tree project. "Mocktails" are non-alcoholic cocktail parties, where safety information, responsible party hosting tips, and samples of "smart" party foods will be provided. OHS first Mocktail event this holiday season will be held at Beebe Hospital on November 22nd with more to be held in December at Christiana, Nanticoke, Kent General and AI DuPont Hospitals, and Dover Downs and Perdue in Milford.

The DUI Tree memorializes alcohol-related deaths and injuries during the campaign period by placing colored light bulbs on the tree to represent each victim. There are four DUI Trees and this year they will have a permanent home with some of the highway safety corporate partners. The trees will be set up the week of Thanksgiving at Kent General Hospital in Dover, Beebe Medical Center in Lewes, Dover Downs Hotel & Casino, and A.I. DuPont Hospital in Wilmington. Last year, 2 people were killed and 57 were injured in alcohol-related crashes in Delaware during the holiday season.

The Safe Family Holiday Campaign, which runs from Thanksgiving Eve to New Year's Day, in conjunction with the *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign, is OHS' major traffic safety initiative for the holiday season. It includes a combination of high visibility enforcement, public

awareness activities, and media messaging aimed at stopping impaired and other dangerous drivers.

For more information on these or any of our other Safe Family Holiday campaign efforts follow us on Twitter @DEHighwaySafe, visit our website for updates at www.ohs.delaware.gov, or Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ArriveAliveDE.

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